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BOUSSOD, VALADON & CO.'S NEW PUBLICATIONS

THE extraordinary perfection to which Messrs. Boussod, Valadon & Co. have carried their process of color-printing upon a photo-gravure foundation—a process only one remove, indeed, below original painting in aquarelle—is brilliantly illustrated by a magnificent plate which the house has just issued, in a necessarily very limited edition, after Edouard Detaille's spirited picture, "Vive l'Empereur." The original canvas, which measures 16 feet in length by 13 feet in height, is now in the Luxembourg, having been presented by the purchaser, who chooses to preserve his anonymity in connection with this princely gift to the French nation. The donor is, I believe, an old friend and constant admirer of the artist. He is, above all, a Frenchman, who believes that by the great art of his nation the patriotism of its people can be best kept alive to its past glories and active in the anticipation of those of the future. Perhaps if we had more patriots like this in America, and fewer politicians, it might be better for us in a time not long to come. Certainly we would have an art in which history would have a chance to supplant mere trivialty and dextrous experiment.

The original picture, which is in this case so superbly rendered, represents a charge of the Fourth Hussars, that splendid light cavalry regiment which so distinguished itself in the Campaign of 1806 in the First Corps of the Grande Armée, under the orders of Colonel Beurthe, Commander of the Legion. From December 25, 1805, it carried off eight crosses at the promotion of the 14th of April, 1807, and eleven when peace was established. It was always on service, and thus, better than any other regiment, symbolizes the light trooper of the magnificent military organization in that war in which, at the battle of Schleitz, on the 9th of October, it had the honor of striking the first sabre blow, and at the taking of Lubeck, on the 6th of November, the last. In the distance on the left, on rising ground, steeped in the bright rays of a roseate sunset, Napoleon is seen surrounded by his staff. Small as the figures of the Emperor and his chiefs of staff are, they are so closely rendered as to be identifiable. The regiment is a true Roman legion. In the decisive gallop the men, all veterans, not by any word of command as on other occasion, but by an irresistible, spontaneous impulse, with one tremendous shout, salute, as they sweep by in a barbaric glory of regimental pride, the silent and resistless man under whose eyes they hope to conquer—who is the embodiment of their country, of their rights, of the glory already acquired, and of future grandeur—of all that is worth living and dying for—the soldier's God, in short. They rush on impetuously, yet able even in their maddest career to exercise some control over themselves in order to reserve enough strength for the final pursuit of the foe. In the front of battle is the leader of the squadron, in scarlet pelisse lined with sable, the famous horseman, General Rothwiller, riding a splendid grey charger, a war horse worthy of a sovereign. The driving movement of the horses, the expression of the troopers, mad with the frenzy of battle, must bring to the least imaginative mind the roar of artillery and the deadly clamor of whistling bullet, of clashing bayonet and clattering sabre. This truly splendid plate measures 25x21 inches, and the proofs are signed by the artist.

It may be worth dwelling for a moment here upon the process by which such a print as this is produced. The foundation of it is a photo-gravure from the original, which renders with exactitude but in light tones the picture from a photographic basis. This plate, having been duly completed, would give, under the press, and in black ink, an accurate but shadowy reproduction of the picture. It passes into the hands of a skilled workman—an artist, indeed, in his way—who, instead of inking the plate in black or brown, as it might be, for a monochrome impression, paints upon the outline it affords him a close representation of the original picture before him. The plate passes from his hands as a reversed copy of the original picture. The pigments he employs are compounded, like printers' ink, with a view to permanency. Having completed his work, the plate is passed under a press, and leaves an impression of itself, in the colors as he laid them on, upon the paper. Once printed, it is cleaned off with turpentine or benzine and sent to him again, to be once more put into shape for the printing. The process, in effect, is more that of a painter—a copyist, but always a painter—rather than that of a printer. On elaborate plates, a skilful colorist may be employed for a day to produce a single impression. He can, at the best, not produce many plates for the press even of the simplest subject. As a certain amount of time is consumed in printing and cleaning each plate, several plates of the same subject may be prepared for him, so that while one is being printed he can be at work on the other. But no matter how it may be simplified, the progress of the work cannot be rapid, since one man must do the work of coloring in order to secure uniformity in the impressions. The monotypes of Mr. Charles A. Walker may be alluded to to render more clear the explanation of how these chromotypes are produced; but at the best Mr. Walker's monotypes were interesting sketches, while these color plates are remarkable reproductions, even in the most delicate qualities, of the originals with which they deal.

Another episode of the great Emperor's wars which Boussod, Valadon & Co. have just made public is an etching by Charles Courty, after Meissonier, called simply "Staff Officer Reconnoiter-

ing." The original belongs to M. Vever, a famous jeweler of Paris, who owns a collection famous among connoisseurs. In spite of its unostentatious title, the picture represents an event significantly recorded by history. The Emperor has dispatched Captain de Caraman, one of his staff officers, on the morrow of the battle of Leipzig, escorted by a single mounted chasseur of the Guard, to reconnoiter the ground over which the French army must necessarily pass to effect its retreat. His field-glass in one hand and his notebook in the other, Captain Caraman notes with scrupulous exactitude the heights and the distances; he marks the woods, the villages, the valleys, and especially the artificial impediments which the map does not show, and which Baeler D'Albe, the Chief of the Topographical Bureau, has consequently been unable to report to the Emperor. Nothing must escape him, for upon the accuracy of his observation and the conscientiousness which he displays in fulfilling his mission depends the salvation of the Emperor and of the army. The calm intentness of his figure, the disciplined stolidity of the single soldier, the wide expanse of country, so full of memories for the future, are given by the painter with a master touch. That which is merely a hilltop with a reconnoitering officer and an equerry to-day will be to-morrow the overlook of the bloody field of Hanau, where the burly Bavarian will learn what the edge of a French sword is like. In the translation of this picture the accomplished etcher exhibits the full capacity of his master-hand.

Still on the field of war comes an etching by L. Kratke, after Detaille, called "To Battery!" the original picture of which is the property of the Commandant Hériot. The scene is laid at the battle of Sedan, and the episode is the coming to the front of the artillery of the Imperial Guard at the close of the deadly day of August 18, 1870. M. Louis D'Eichthal, of General Bourbaki's staff, describes the scene vividly: "With what happiness, with what pride," says he, "this superb troop, upon which was to devolve the honor of checking the success of the Prussian Guard, was seen to advance. The guns and carriages succeeded each other with astonishing rapidity, raising an immense cloud of dust, in the midst of which, however, one could distinguish very clearly the conductors, full of entrain, waving their right arms to stimulate their horses. This artillery went beyond the ridge in front of the wood and established its battery at about 500 metres from St. Privat-la-Montagne, at a distance of 600 or 700 metres from the enemy's position. They received a hail of shell, but the losses they sustained were comparatively slight." It is this moment, when the Colonel orders his troop to halt and form into battery, that the artist has chosen, and which the etcher has rendered with an appreciative hand.

By Camille Fonce the house issues an artist etching, "A Normandy Shrine—La Delivrande." La Delivrande, which is situated about ten miles from Caen, very near the sea, is one of the most venerated sanctuaries in the whole of Normandy. The chapel, which was founded in the fourth century by St. Regnabert, destroyed by the Normans, rebuilt in the eleventh century, and which was ornamented a few years ago with a tower, whose spire attains a height of 160 feet, contains a statue of the Virgin which has a miraculous origin, as the story goes, and which throughout the pillages and sacks of the church by the Protestants and Revolutionists was, we are told, most miraculously protected. The Bishops of Bayeux were accustomed to pay a reverence at it before taking possession of their seats, and the pilgrimage which Louis XI made to Our Lady of La Delivrande on the day of the Assumption in the year 1443 has remained celebrated. M. Fonce has given to this poetic and picturesque scene a representation full of tenderness and artistic feeling. No happier choice could have been made for a subject for his delicate and tender manipulation of the needle and the dry-point.

Two reproductions in which are combined all the resources of mechanical reproductions, assisted by the skill of the artist and the etcher, are plates executed after the pictures by Ludwig Knaus by E. Varin. The originals are rich in picturesque incident and character. They comprise a tavern interior, on the evening after a fair-day, and the "Gipsy Encampment," which is one of the artist's famous pictures. In the reproductions the etcher has really exhausted the resources of his art. He has etched on a photo-gravure foundation and reinforced his needle with the dry point and the roulette, until he has secured a quite majestic result. It would be difficult to imagine any means by which a more substantial or effective repetition in a single color of the pictures could be secured.

In the Christmas number of *The Journalist*, which is, incidentally remarked, one of the most readable, original and pretty publications of the holiday season, Mr. Perriton Maxwell has some words to say on the subject of art criticism in this country which it would profit many of our daily papers to give heed to. I have not the pleasure of Mr. Maxwell's personal acquaintance, though I believe he is the art critic of *The Recorder*, of this city, but he tells so much truth in so little space that I am happy to be able to acknowledge the justice of his main statements, and to congratulate my caerulean and cigarettesque friend, Mr. Forman, on this special essay among the many bright papers he has brought together from the bright pens of the press.